



18th Battalion Association

Windsor and Detroit Branch

MEMORIES

One of the best known, best liked, and friendliest men in the ranks of the Eighteenth Battalion was the late George Thomas who started out as a member of our Platoon but ended up as the Bandmaster of the Battalion Band. I still remember the wet day late in October, 1914, when George and I and several others waited in a drafty old building to be medically examined by a Dr. Ratz. When the enlistment formalities had been completed and we were all advised to be at the station on Monday morning, George suggested dinner at a nearby Chinese Restaurant. Two or three others later joined us and we all had a good dinner with a lot of nice conversation.

When I arrived at the station on Monday, I noticed George standing with a group of men he seemed to know well. Lieut. McIntosh was in charge of the party and George Mogg was helping out by checking off the names of the men as they arrived and reported. A short time later, C.P. No. 21 arrived and we all boarded an empty coach for the trip to London.

As soon as we were nicely settled in Queens Park the Y.M.C.A. was opened in the building near the Dundas St. entrance. Although it was not too large, it had tables and chairs, a piano, and a well-stocked canteen. It later became the meeting place for the troops.

It was then we found out that George could play the piano, and he was always willing to do so for the little sing-songs and impromptu concerts that were later arranged. I can still see George sitting on the little round piano stool, playing for his fortyish odd friend with the black moustache and the nice voice. He sang at every concert but always the same song, "When we come to the end of a perfect day".

When the Officers decided we should have a Battalion Band, George was one of the men called in to help with the arrangements. I believe we all donated a day's pay for the instruments. Within a few weeks, the Band became a reality and after practicing daily for some time, could play four or five pieces very nicely. Those who were on the Grampian will remember the Band playing on deck as we waited for the H.M.S. Cumberland to anchor nearby.

George was with the Battalion a long time and when he returned he only remained in Galt a short time before moving to Detroit where he secured employment with the Burroughs Adding Machine. He spent most of his week-ends in Windsor as he was always close to the late Phil Thorpe, and several other members of the Battalion. He also liked to play golf and for a while lived at the home of Al. Devine. His employers later built a new plant in Plymouth, Michigan, and George was transferred there. A few years later he had an attack of Nephritis, and became a patient in the Plymouth Community Hospital. Phil arranged for some of us to go and see him. George was glad to see us. I thought he looked uncomfortable and depressed. We had a nice visit and just before we left, Phil asked George if he would like him to try and get him into Westminster or some other Canadian hospital. George just nodded and almost broke down. The following morning, Phil telephoned Knox Garrett, a former member of the Battalion who held a responsible position in Westminster Hospital. Phil explained everything to him and Knox, who knew George, said he would see what he could do. A few days later, the necessary authority for George to be admitted to Grace Hospital here was received. During the first month or so, George seemed to improve but later passed away apparently from Uremic Poisoning. His funeral was well-attended. Every time I hear George's name mentioned, I usually think of the Eighteenth Band and what a nice pleasant and desirable person he was while serving with the Battalion. It all seems so long ago.

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